



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**DESCRIPTIVE MORPHOLOGY, MORPHOMETRY, COMMUNITY
STRUCTURE AND SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF HELMINTH
PARASITES IN THE MALAYAN BOX TURTLE, *CUORA
AMBOINENSIS* (CHELONIA: BATAGURIDAE)
FROM PENINSULAR MALAYSIA**

REUBEN SUNIL KUMAR SHARMA

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By

REUBEN SUNIL KUMAR SHARMA

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Veterinary Science at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

May 2001



Dedicated to future chelonian parasitologists, who, unless science stagnates,
will find themselves compelled to review my opinions

“We are as dwarfs mounted on the shoulders of giants,
so we can see more and farther than they;
yet not by virtue of the keenness of our eyesight,
not through the tallness of our stature,
but because we are raised and borne aloft upon that giant mass”

— *John of Galsbury* —

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Veterinary Science

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Chairman: Associate Professor Dr. Rehana Abdullah Sani, DVM, Ph.D

Faculty: Veterinary Medicine

Thirty-six wild-caught *Cuora amboinensis* from Peninsular Malaysia, comprising adults and juveniles of both sexes, were examined for helminth endoparasites. A total of 11 species (5 nematodes and 6 trematodes) were recovered from various organs, namely, *Serpinema octorugatus* (small intestine), *Falcaustra duyagi* (large intestine), *Falcaustra* sp. 1 (large intestine), Oxyurid larvae sp. 1 (liver), Oxyurid larvae sp. 2 (large intestine), Atractidae sp. (large intestine), *Parorientodiscus magnus* (large intestine), Digenea sp. 1 (liver), Digenea sp. 2 (large intestine), *Polystomoides malayi* (urinary bladder), and *Polystomoides asiaticus* (oral cavity). Seven of these helminths were not previously recorded in *C. amboinensis*, while 4 species, namely *Falcaustra* sp. 1, Digenea spp. 1 and 2., and the Atractidae sp. may be new species and geographical records, and require further taxonomic workout.

The morphology and morphometry of 4 helminth species, namely, *S. octorugatus*, *F. duyagi*, *P. magnus* and *P. malayi* were studied in detail. A rigorous redescription of *S. octorugatus* was done with the aid of SEM and Pepsin-HCL

digestion. New information was obtained including the number and arrangement of the buccal ridges, the absence of the lateral papillae, the addition of a fifth post anal papillae and the complex structure of the spicule tip. This study also demonstrated the usefulness of the relative positions of the caudal papillae and derived ratios, in the characterisation of the genus *Serpinema*.

The helminth community structure of *C. amboinensis* in relation to age, gender and lifestage categories was investigated for the first time. This chelonian had a rich assemblage of helminths (observed richness = 11; expected richness, Chao2 = 9.17), with high diversity (Shannon's index = 0.78) and low evenness (0.36). This supports previous claims that *C. amboinensis* is vagile in food habits and habitat selection. Two helminths, namely *S. octorugatus* and *F. duyagi* exhibited high intensity and prevalence, and were designated as core and dominant species, while *Falcaustra* sp. 1 and Oxyurid sp. 1 were regarded as unsuccessful pioneers. The helminth community structure between the various hosts age, gender and lifestage categories were different, and may be attributed to disparate feeding habits and habitat utilisation.

Results on the spatial distribution of the helminths found in the alimentary canal of *C. amboinensis* indicate that the worms are site specific, with a relatively narrow niche width. Further, interspecific competition may not be a prominent factor in determining the habitat restriction of helminths in this turtle host. Significant and positive correlation (Spearman's rank coefficient = 0.45, $P < 0.05$) was found between the intensity and prevalence of *S. octorugatus* and the packing density of the

mucosal folds in the cranial duodenum. These helminths may actively select this niche, as the close proximity of the mucosal folds arranged in a complex labyrinth provide structural support and added traction, which function to stabilise the attachment interface. The large intestinal nematode (*F. duyagi*), on the contrary, appeared to select its habitat based on physiological rather than morphological cues. It is likely that this luminal feeder is attracted to the prolonged retention of food material in the large intestine, and the presence of particulate digesta and abundant micro-organisms.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains Veterinar

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Oleh

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Mei 2001

Pengerusi: Profesor Madya Dr. Rehana Abdullah Sani, DVM, Ph.D

Fakulti: Perubatan Veterinar

Tiga puluh enam ekor *Cuora amboinensis* liar dari Semenanjung Malaysia, yang terdiri daripada dewasa dan juvana dari kedua-dua jantina, telah diperiksa untuk parasit helmin. Sejumlah 11 spesis (5 nematoda dan 6 trematoda) telah dijumpai dari pelbagai organ iaitu, *Serpinema octorugatus* (usus kecil), *Falcaustra duyagi* (usus besar), *Falcaustra* sp. 1 (usus besar), Oxyurid larvae sp. 1 (hati), Oxyurid larvae sp. 2 (usus besar), Atractidae sp. (usus besar), *Parorientodiscus magnus* (usus besar), Digenea sp. 1 (hati), Digenea sp. 2 (usus besar), *Polystomoides malayi* (pundi kencing), dan *Polystomoides asiaticus* (mulut). Peringkat juvana *P. malayi* dan *P. asiaticus*, masing-masing dijumpai didalam ginjal dan paru-paru. Tujuh daripada helmin yang jumpai, pada *C. amboinensis* adalah rekod baru. Empat spesis lain, terutamanya, *Falcaustra* sp. 1, Digenea spp. 1 dan 2, serta spesis Atractidae mungkin merupakan rekod lokasi dan spesis yang baru. Walau bagaimanapun, pemeriksaan taxonomi selanjutnya diperlukan sebelum helmin ini dapat diberi gelaran spesis baru.

Ciri-ciri morfologi dan morfometri 4 spesis helmin, iaitu, *S. octorugatus*, *F. duyagi*, *P. magnus* dan *P. malayi*, telah dikaji dengan teliti. *Scanning electron microscope* telah digunakan untuk meneliti struktur permukaan, terutamanya pada kawasan kepala, ekor, dan spikul. Struktur dalaman mulut *S. octorugatus* serta morfologi *tridents*, *peribuccal shields*, *connecting cylinder* dan *basal ring* dikaji selepas tisu persekitaran telah dihadam dalam larutan pepsin-HCL. Kajian ini telah menemui beberapa ciri-ciri baru helminth ini, termasuk, susunan *buccal ridges*, ketidakhadiran papillae tepi, penambahan papillae *postanal* yang ke-lima, dan struktur kompleks hujung *spicule*. Kajian ini juga mengesyorkan penggunaan posisi relatif papilla ekor sebagai suatu indikator yang baik untuk mengenalpasti genus *Serpinema*.

Struktur komuniti helmin pada *C. amboinensis* menurut umur, jantina dan peringkat hidup telah dikaji buat pertama kalinya. Spesis kura-kura ini dijangkiti dengan *richness* helmin yang agak tinggi (Index Shannon's = 0.78) dan *evenness* yang rendah (0.36). Dua spesis helmin (*S. octorugatus* dan *F. duyagi*) menunjuk intensiti dan prevalens yang tinggi, lalu dikenalpasti sebagai *core species*. Menurut *dominance ranking*, *S. octorugatus*, *F. duyagi* dan spesis Atractidae diberi designasi *dominant species*, manakala *Falcaustra* sp. 1 dan Oxyurid sp. 1 dikenalpasti sebagai *unsuccessful pioneer*. Perbezaan struktur komuniti helmin diantara jantina dan umur mungkin disebabkan oleh perbezaan makanan, keluasan kawasan merayau dan penggunaan habitat. Walau bagaimanapun, maklumat ekologi *C. amboinensis* diperlukan sebelum sebarang inferens konkrit dapat dikemukakan.

Keputusan penyebaran helmin di dalam salur pemakanan menunjukkan bahawa cacing ini menepat di kawasan-kawasan tertentu dan terhad dari segi keluasan habitat. Pertandingan diantara spesis mungkin tidak mustahak dalam menentukan habitat masing-masing. Intensiti dan peratus jangkitan didapati signifikan dan berkadar positif (Spearman's rank coefficient = 0.45, $P < 0.05$) dengan kemampatan lipatan pada lapisan mukosa. Dicaadangkan bahawa spesis helmin ini memilih kawasan duodenum secara aktif, kerana struktur *labyrinth* mukosa memberi sokongan untuk mencengkam. Helmin usus besar (*F. duyagi*) tidak menunjukkan afiniti kepada perbezaan morfologi usus, malahan mungkin tertarik kepada makanan dan mikro-organisma yang terdapat di dalam segmen usus ini.

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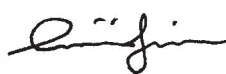
I certify that an Examination Committee met on 18th May 2001 to conduct the final examination of Reuben Sunil Kumar Sharma on his master of Veterinary Science thesis entitled “Descriptive Morphology, Morphometry, Community Structure, and Spatial Distribution of Helminth Parasites in *Cuora amboinensis* (Chelonia: Bataguridae) from Peninsular Malaysia” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and the Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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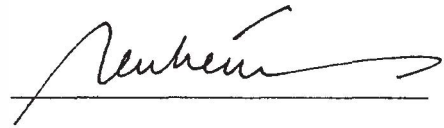
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



Reuben Sunil Kumar Sharma

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
DEDICATION.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ABSTRAK.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
APPROVAL SHEETS.....	x
DECLARATION FORM.....	xii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xvii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xxi
 CHAPTER	
I GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
II LITERATUTRE REVIEW.....	4
Helminth Parasites of Reptiles in General.....	4
Helminth Community Structure in Chelonians and Other Reptiles	9
Spatial Distribution and Resource Partitioning of Helminth	
Parasites in Chelonians and Other Reptiles.....	12
Parasites of Chelonians from Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore.	15
Natural History of the Malayan Box Turtle, <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> ...	18
III DESCRIPTIVE MORPHOLOGY, MORPHOMETRY AND	
SCANNING ELECTRON MICROSCOPY OF HELMINTH	
PARASITES IN <i>CUORA AMBOINENSIS</i>	20
Introduction.....	20
Materials and Methods.....	21
Animals and Dissection.....	21
Parasite Collection and Processing.....	22
Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM).....	24
Results.....	25
Descriptive Morphometry.....	26
Discussion.....	76
<i>Serpinema octorugatus</i>	76
<i>Falcaustra duyagi</i>	82
<i>Parorientodiscus magnus</i>	89
<i>Polystomoides malayi</i>	93



IV	HELMINTH COMMUNITY STRUCTURE IN <i>CUORA AMBOINENSIS</i> : COMPARISONS BETWEEN HOST, AGE, GENDER, AND LIFESTAGES	97
	Introduction.....	97
	Material and Methods.....	98
	Animals and Dissection.....	98
	Recovery of Helminths from Internal Organs.....	99
	Enumeration of Helminths.....	101
	Analysis of Intrapopulation and Infracommunity Structure.....	102
	Statistical Analysis.....	106
	Results.....	107
	Helminth Component Community.....	107
	Comparative Helminth Distribution among Host Sample Groups.....	111
	Specific Helminth Distribution among Host Groups.....	124
	Helminth Species Associations and Interactions.....	138
	Discussion.....	144
	Helminth Component Community.....	144
	Comparative Helminth Distribution among Host Sample Groups.....	152
	Helminth Species Associations and Interactions.....	153
V	SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF INTESTINAL HELMINTHS IN <i>CUORA AMBOINENSIS</i> , AND ASSOCIATIONS OF CORE SPECIES WITH INTESTINAL MORPHOLOGY AND STEREOLOGY.....	155
	Introduction.....	155
	Materials and Methods.....	156
	Animals and Dissection.....	157
	Recovery of Intestinal Helminths and Determination of Spatial Distribution.....	157
	Stereological Method for Random Sampling of Intestinal Tissues.....	157
	Stereological sampling for Histology.....	158
	Stereological Quantification of Intestinal Relief from Normal <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	159
	Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) of Intestinal Mucosal Relief.....	162
	Statistical Analysis.....	163

Results.....	163
Linear Spatial Distribution of Helminths along the Alimentary Tract.....	163
Gross Intestinal Morphology.....	177
Intestinal Mucosal Surface Structure: Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), Light Microscopy (LM) and Stereology.....	177
Correlation between Core Helminth Distribution and Intestinal variables.....	188
Discussion.....	194
Helminth Species Linear Distribution within the Alimentary Canal.....	194
Relationship Between Core Species Distribution and Intestinal Morphology and Stereology.....	199
VI GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	205
REFERENCES.....	210
APPENDICES.....	225
VITAE.....	241

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Morphometry (μm) of adult male and female <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	32
2 Morphometry (μm) and comparative ratios of the caudal papillae of male <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	34
3 Morphometry (values in μm unless stated otherwise) of adult male and female <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	46
4 Morphometry (μm) of 11 adult <i>Parorientodiscus magnus</i> from the large intestines of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	55
5 Morphometry (μm) of 8 adult <i>Polystomoides malayi</i> from the urinary bladder of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	60
6 Morphometry (μm) of adult male and female of an unidentified species of Atractidae from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> ..	63
7 Morphometry (μm) of adult male and female unidentified <i>Falcaustra</i> sp. 1 from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	67
8 Morphometry (μm) of 3 adult <i>Polystomoides asiaticus</i> from the oral cavity of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	70
9 Morphometry (μm) of 4 adult liver flukes (Digenea sp. 1) from <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	73
10 Morphometry (μm) of 8 intestinal flukes (Digenea sp. 2) from <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	74
11 Comparative morphometry (μm) of male <i>Serpinema</i> spp. known to occur in chelonians from Asia.....	80
12 Comparative morphometry (μm) of female <i>Serpinema</i> spp. known to occur in chelonians from Asia.....	81
13 Comparative morphometry (mean with range in parenthesis) of adult male <i>Falcaustra</i> spp. recorded from chelonians in Southeast Asia....	85
14 Comparative morphometry (mean with range in parenthesis) of adult female <i>Falcaustra</i> spp. recorded from chelonians in Southeast Asia..	87



15	Comparative morphometry (mean with range in parenthesis) of the Paramphistomatidae known to occur in chelonians from Southeast Asia.....	91
16	Comparative morphometry (mean with range in parenthesis) of <i>Polystomoides</i> spp. known to occur in chelonians from Southeast Asia.....	95
17	Morphometry of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> utilised for this study. Specimens were collected from 4 locations in Peninsular Malaysia, namely, Jerangau Barat (Terengganu), Setiu (Terengganu), Ipoh (Perak), and Melaka.....	109
18	Helminth species distribution, site of infection, and prevalence between different lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	110
19	Overall helminth community diversity and evenness characteristics of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia, irrespective of age or gender categories.....	112
20	Comparative indices of helminth community structure in 4 lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	120
21	Comparative indices of helminth community structure in 4 age and gender categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia...	121
22	Qualitative community similarity characteristics measured using the Jaccard Coefficient (top right cells) and Sorensen's Qualitative Coefficient (bottom left cells) for the different lifestages (adult male – AdM; adult female – AdF; juvenile male – JuvM; juvenile female – JuvF) of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	122
23	Quantitative community similarity characteristics measured using the Morisita-Horn Index (top right cells) and Sorensen's Quantitative Coefficient (bottom left cells) for different lifestages (adult male – AdM; adult female – AdF; juvenile male – JuvM; juvenile female – JuvF) of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	122
24	Qualitative community similarity characteristics measured using the Jaccard Coefficient (C_j) and Sorensen's Qualitative Coefficient (C_{squal}) and quantitative similarities using the Morisita-Horn Index (C_{mh}) and Sorensen's Quantitative Coefficient (C_{squan}) for different gender classes (males – M; females – F) of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	123

25	Qualitative community similarity characteristics measured using the Jaccard Coefficient (C_j) and Sorensen's Qualitative Coefficient (C_{squal}) and quantitative similarities using the Morisita-Horn Index (C_{mh}) and Sorensen's Quantitative Coefficient (C_{squan}) for different age (adults – Ad; juveniles – Juv) of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	123
26	Comparative distribution frequencies of the various helminth species in the different age, gender and lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	126
27	Comparative component population (M – male, F – female, Larv – larvae) and infrapopulation (InfP) structure of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> in 4 lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	129
28	Comparative component population (M – male, F – female, L – larvae) and infrapopulation (InfP) structure of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> in 4 age and gender categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	130
29	Comparative component population (M – male, F – female, Larv – larvae) and infrapopulation (InfP) structure of <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> in 4 lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	131
30	Comparative component population (CCP: M – male, F – female, L – larvae) and infrapopulation (InfP) structure of <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> in 4 age and gender categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	132
31	Comparative component population (M – male, F – female, Larv – larvae) and infrapopulation (InfP) structure of <i>Falcaustra</i> sp. 1 and unidentified Atractidae sp. in adult female <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia. Overall values include data from other age and sex classes that were negative for these helminths.....	133
32	Comparative infrapopulation structure of an unidentified oxyurid larvae from the liver (species 1) and <i>Parorientodiscus magnus</i> according to 4 lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	134
33	Comparative infrapopulation structure of an unidentified Oxyurid larvae from the liver (species 2) and <i>Parorientodiscus magnus</i> according to 4 age and gender categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia.....	135

34	Comparative infrapopulation structure of two monogeneans, <i>Polystomoides malayi</i> and <i>Polystomoides asiaticus</i> according to 4 lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	136
35	Comparative infrapopulation structure of two monogeneans, <i>Polystomoides malayi</i> and <i>Polystomoides asiaticus</i> according to 4 age and gender categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	137
36	Comparative importance index (I) of the various helminth species in the different age, gender and lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	142
37	Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (r_s) of mean abundance (upper right cells) and mean intensity (lower left cells) between the various helminth species found in <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	143
38	Collective helminth species mean intensity along the alimentary canal (vacant niches excluded) of 36 <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> irrespective of age, gender or lifestage	170
39	Collective helminth species mean abundance along the alimentary canal (vacant niches excluded) of 36 <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> irrespective of age, gender or lifestage	171
40	Total number of worms of the various helminth species in the alimentary tract sections of 36 <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> irrespective of age, gender or lifestage	176
41	Intestinal morphometry (mean \pm SE, CV, range in parentheses) of uninfected adult <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	186
42	Intestinal stereology of uninfected adult <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	187
43	Spearman's correlation coefficient (r_s) between the intensity and abundance of 2 core helminth species (<i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> and <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i>) and intestinal morphometry and stereology of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	190

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) lateral and B) dorsal view of the anterior end.....	35
2 <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the intestines of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) ventral and B) lateral view of male tail end.....	36
3 Light micrographs of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) lateral cephalic end of female B) dorsal cephalic end of female C) vulva region of female D) tail end of female ending in a tri pronged tip (mucrons) E) lateral view of male tail end F) ventral view of male tail end.....	37
4 Scanning electron micrographs of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> A) apical view showing the lateral pairs of peribuccal shields (bs); B) dorsal view of buccal opening C) dorsal view of cephalic region D) lateral view of cephalic region E) body with fine transverse striations F) vulva region of female showing the prominent anterior vulva flap (avf) and vulva opening (vu).....	38
5 Scanning electron micrographs of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) dorso-ventral view of the inner surface of the buccal capsule showing the buccal ridges (br) and connecting cylinder (cc) B) close-up of the connecting cylinder showing the separation (arrow) from the buccal capsule proper. C, D, E, F) lateral views of the inner surface of the buccal capsule illustrating the variation in the arrangement and numbers of buccal ridges.....	39
6 Scanning electron micrographs of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) male tail end B) cloacal region of male C) tail tip of female D) male spicule lateral view E) close-up of the lateral aspect of the spicule F) dorsal view of the spicule.....	40
7 Scanning electron micrographs of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> from the small intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) anterior view of the buccal capsule B) dorsal view of the buccal capsule C) posterior view of the buccal capsule showing the basal ring (br) and basal opening of the buccal capsule D,E,F) lateral views of the buccal capsule illustrating the variation in architecture which may be attributed to age-related chitinization, basal ring (br), connecting cylinder (cc).....	41

8	<i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) anterior end B) lateral view of male tail end C) ventral view of male tail end.....	48
9	Light micrographs of <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> A) cephalic end B) anterior end showing the different segments of the oesophagus C) mid-body of gravid D) distal end of female showing the anal opening (an) E) tail end of F) typical <i>Falcaustra</i> morulated (1) and undeveloped (2) eggs found in the faeces of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	49
10	Scanning electron micrographs of <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) lateral cephalic end B) apical view showing the arrangement of the cephalic papillae (cp) and lips (lp) C) tail end of female D) tail end of male with protruding spicules (sp) and caudal pseudosuckers (cps) E) tail tip of male showing the caudal papillae F) excretory pore. Scale bars and primary magnification as indicated on the respective plates.....	50
11	Scanning electron micrographs of <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) lateral view of the male spicule showing the extent and arrangement of the spines (sp) B) medial view of the male spicule C) dorsal view of the male spicule showing the dorsal boundary of the spines D) proximal end of the spicule E) close-up view of the spicule spines (sp) showing their simple structure F) cervical papillae (cp) surrounded by a cuticular ridge (cr) and groove.....	51
12	Ventral view of <i>Parorientodiscus magnus</i> from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	56
13	Light micrographs of <i>Parorientodiscus magnus</i> from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) anterior portion B) ovary (ov), Mehli's gland (mg) and caeca (ce) C) the anterior (at) and posterior (pt) testes are lobed and tandem in orientation D) developed egg in the uterus E) scanning electron micrograph showing the ventral sucker (vs) and ridges (vsr). F) light micrograph of <i>Polystomoides malayi</i> showing the arrangement and structure of the genital spines...	57
14	Ventral view of <i>Polystomoides malayi</i> from the urinary bladder of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	61
15	Scanning electron and light micrographs of <i>Polystomoides malayi</i> from the urinary bladder of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A, B) anterior portion showing the prominent oral sucker (os) and pharyngeal bulb (ph) C, D) opisthaptor with six large suckers (hs) and one pair of large opisthaptoral hooks (hk) E) undeveloped egg with the characteristic trematode operculum (arrow); F) genital pore (gp) surrounded by numerous small genital spines (gs).....	62

16	Unidentified species of Atractidae from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) anterior end B) cephalic end C) male tail end showing the characteristic curved tip D) close-up of male anal region	64
17	Light micrographs of an unidentified species of Atractidae from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) anterior end of female showing the anterior (at) and posterior (pt) portions of the oesophagus B) typical form of the male with a curled posterior end and pointed tail C) the tail end of the female is straight, slender and pointed D) mid-body of female showing numerous larvae (lav) in the uterus E) posterior end of the female showing the close proximity of the vulva (vu) and anus (an) F) unidentified Oxyurid larvae encapsulated in the liver of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	65
18	Scanning electron micrographs of an unidentified species of Atractidae from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A, B and C) apical view showing the different position of the lips and cephalic papillae D) caudal end of female illustrating the close proximity of the vulva (vu) and anus (an) E) caudal end of male F) male with extruded spicule (sp).....	66
19	Light micrographs of <i>Falcaustra</i> sp. 1 from the large intestine of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> A) cephalic end showing the lips (lp) and pharynx (ph) B) anterior end of female showing the different segments of the C) mid-body region of female D) Tail end of female showing the anus (an) and simple pointed tip E) tail end of male F) a single pseudosucker (ps) was present on the tail.....	69
20	Ventral view of <i>Polystomoides asiaticus</i> from the oral cavity of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i>	71
21	Light micrographs of <i>Polystomoides asiaticus</i> found in the oral cavity of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . A) anterior portion B) mid-body C) close-up of the genital bulb showing the structure and arrangement of the genital hooks (ghk) D) posterior end showing the opisthaptor (ops), hooks and suckers; E and F) immature <i>P. asiaticus</i> found in the lungs showing the undeveloped pharynx and opisthaptor.....	72
22	Light micrographs of unidentified digenetic trematodes found in <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> A) Digenea sp. 1 from the liver – elongated form with eggs in the uterus; B) the same species - contracted form C) Digenea sp. 2 from the large intestine D) the same species – anterior end showing the prominent oral pouches (op) and oesophageal bulb (eb).....	75

23	A) Species accumulation curve (SAC) of helminth parasites in 36 <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia, irrespective of age and gender, B) SAC for juvenile males (n=10), C) SAC for juvenile females (n=6), D) SAC for adult males (n=10), E) SAC for adult females (n=10)	114
24	Species accumulation curve (SAC) of helminth parasites in 36 <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia, with regards to age and gender A) SAC for adults (n=20), B) SAC for juveniles (n=16), C) SAC for males (n=20), D) SAC for females (n=16)	115
25	Collective frequency distribution of the helminth species richness in <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia, irrespective of age and gender categories	116
26	Frequency distribution of the helminth species richness in <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia, irrespective of age and gender categories	116
27	Scattergram of prevalence versus log mean intensity of helminths in <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia, irrespective of age and gender categories Core species appear in the upper-right quadrant	140
28	Comparative scattergrams of prevalence versus log mean intensity of helminths in <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia, with regards to the various lifestages, age and gender categories Core species appear in the upper-right quadrant	140
29	Helminth species richness (number of species), general spatial distribution, and presence of empty niches (blocks with diagonal lines) in the various sections of the alimentary tract of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	165
30	Percentage of infection in the various segments of the alimentary tract in the overall sample population of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	165
31	Linear distribution (represented by boxes) of the various helminth species within the alimentary tract of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	166
32	Mean intensity of the dominant (D) and codominant (CD) helminth species in the various intestinal segments of 4 lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	172
33	Mean abundance of the dominant (D) and codominant (CD) helminth species in the various intestinal segments of 4 lifestage categories of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> from Peninsular Malaysia	174

34	Scanning electron and light micrographs of the intestinal mucosal relief of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> showing the arrangement and extent of the mucosal folds and mucosal epithelial cells. Small intestine segment 1 (Si 1) – A,C,E; Small intestine segment 2 (Si 2) – B,D,F.....	181
35	Scanning electron and light micrographs of the intestinal mucosal relief of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> showing the arrangement and extent of the mucosal folds and mucosal epithelial cells. Small intestine segment 3 (Si 3) – A,C,E; Small intestine segment 4 (Si 4) – B,D,F.....	182
36	Scanning electron and light micrographs of the intestinal mucosal relief of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> showing the arrangement and extent of the mucosal folds and mucosal epithelial cells. Small intestine segment 5 (Si 5) – A,C,E; Small intestine segment 6 (Si 6) – B,D,F.....	183
37	Scanning electron and light micrographs of the intestinal mucosal relief of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> showing the arrangement and extent of the mucosal folds and mucosal epithelial cells. Small intestine segment 7 (Si 7) – A,C,E; Large intestine segment 1 (Li 8) – B,D,F.....	184
38	Scanning electron and light micrographs of the intestinal mucosal relief of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> showing the arrangement and extent of the mucosal folds and mucosal epithelial cells. Large intestine segment 2 (Li 9) – A,C,E; Large intestine segment 3 (Li 10) – B,D,F.....	185 191
39	Linear distribution of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> in the various intestinal segments of adult <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> , in relation to intestinal morphology and stereology.....	192
40	Linear distribution of <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> in the various intestinal segments of adult <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> , in relation to intestinal morphology and stereology.....	
41	Gross appearance and scanning electron micrographs showing the distribution of <i>Serpinema octorugatus</i> in the oesophagus (A, C, D) and anterior duodenum (B, E) and <i>Falcaustra duyagi</i> in the large intestine (F) of <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> . Scanning electron micrograph (D) illustrates the attachment interface in the oesophagus.....	193